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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC) to relate grade point average (GPA) at the college to subsequent performance on the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST). In October 1983, 1,044 associate degree (AA) graduates took the CLAST. Of these, 431 had a GPA of 3.0 or higher at MDCC. An analysis of the CLAST scores of these graduates revealed: (1) 20.4% of the graduates failed one or more of the CLAST examinations; (2) 6% scored below the recommended cut in reading, 0.7% scored below the cut in writing, 1.9% failed in computation, and 18.1% failed in the essay portion of the test; (3) of the AA graduates tested at Mitchell Wolfson campus, 59.8% had a GPA of 3.00 or more but 34.3% failed one or more of the CLAST exams; and (4) the failure rates of AA graduates at South Campus was 15.5%, at Medical Center 16.7%, and at North Campus 20.7%. A discussion of study implications highlights the problems revealed by the large number of students who earned high GPA's but failed to perform well on the CLAST. (HB)

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RELATING GRADE POINT AVERAGE AT MIAMI-DADE TO SUBSEQUENT STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON THE COLLEGE LEVEL ACADEMIC SKILLS TEST (CLAST)

Research Report No. 84-03

February 1984

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OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

JC 850 231

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Relating Grade Point Average
at Miami-Dade
to Subsequent Student Performance
on the College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST)

Students transferring to universities from two-year colleges have typically experienced a decline as a group in grade point average. This has been interpreted as relating specifically to two factors. The first is referred to as transfer shock and is intended to include such variables as the adjustments attendant to moving away from home, relocating in a new social environment, and competing with students who are used to a fairly rigorous academic environment. The second reason attributed for the decline in grade point average is the generally inflated grades awarded by two-year college instructors. By and large, two-year college instructors are less rigorous in their award of grades than are university instructors (Losak, Research Report #79-19). Therefore, it is not unusual to find studies which show that large groups of students who had grade point averages of 2.70 or 2.80 at the community colleges dropping to 2.20 or 2.30 in the first term of attendance at a university.

At Miami-Dade the modal grade awarded by instructors on North and Mitchell Wolfson New World Center Campuses for the Fall Term 1983 was an "A". At three campuses, more A's were awarded than C's. These grade distributions reflect the continuance of grading practices that convey to students an unrealistic sense of accomplishment. In order to examine the success of students on the CLAST who had been awarded high grade point averages, an analysis was conducted of all those A.A. graduates who earned a 3.00 grade point average or higher to ascertain their subsequent performance on the CLAST.

I should mention that we are in the process of establishing a file which will permit analysis on the basis of grades earned only in English courses, or grades earned only in mathematics courses, to be followed with an analysis of performance on the appropriate CLAST subtest. This data analysis is not now ready but the overall analysis presented

in the current report will give some indication of the trends and the extent to which there may be issues involved which need further elaboration.

Of all the students writing the CLAST who had a 3.00 or better grade point average, 20.4% failed one or more examinations. The distribution by examination and by campus is presented in Table 1.

Although more precise detail can be provided in the future when we match grades in English versus performance on the Writing and Essay examinations, there is nonetheless some information to be derived from the level of analysis presented in the table. For example, of the 431 A.A. graduates who had a grade point average of 3.00 or more, 88 failed one or more examinations based on the passing scores recommended by the State Panel on CLAST. It should be noted that these scores are minimal and are intended to escalate in 1986 and 1989. Of the 88 people who failed one or more of the CLAST examinations, 78 failed the Essay, 8 on the Computation, only 3 in the Writing, and 26 on Reading.

Of the A.A. graduates tested at Mitchell Wolfson Campus, 59.8% had a GPA of 3.00 or more, yet of these, 34.3% failed one or more of the examinations. This contrasts with a 15.5% failure rate at South Campus, 16.7% who failed one or more examinations at Medical Center, and 20.7% who failed one or more on North Campus.

It seems clear that there are fairly large numbers of students who are earning high grade point averages but not performing well on the CLAST. From a speculative position, it is of course debatable whether there is a predictor (grade point average) concern or whether concern should be expressed regarding the criterion measure (CLAST). Note for example that none of the students from Mitchell Wolfson Campus failed the Writing portion of the CLAST, whereas 20 failed the Essay. It is safe to assume that large numbers of the students who were writing the exam were bilingual and perform in a more adequate manner on a multiple choice examination which assesses their knowledge of the English language than on an essay examination. This is a very common distinction and widely found among persons who are learning a second language. From a practical

standpoint, however, the students are going to be expected to perform adequately on the Essay regardless of arguments that are presented regarding the dual language barrier. It would seem that students can demonstrate their skill level on the multiple choice examination in an adequate fashion, but as the State regulations currently stand, this alone will not be acceptable.

It is difficult to reconcile the fact that Miami-Dade is an open-door, two-year college with the fact that the modal grade awarded on two campuses is an "A". One must be concerned regarding the primrose path students are finding themselves on as a result of their receipt of grades which reflect a knowledge that is not, in many instances, sufficiently substantive to be academically competitive, at least as measured by the CLAST. Evidence that some change in grading practice is occurring is presented by comparing the cumulative term grade point average for first-time-in-college students from 1982 to 1983, which decreased from 2.36 to 2.24 (Morris, Research Report #84-08).

Table 1

CLAST Performance of A.A. Graduates
With Cumulative GPA > = 3.00
October 1983 CLAST Administration

Outcome Measures	Campus				
	North	South	Mitchell Wolfson	Medical Center	College Wide
Total A.A. Grads Tested	339	539	117	49	1,044
Graduates with GPA > = 3.00	150	193	70	18	431
Percent of Total A.A. Grads	44.2	35.8	59.8	36.7	41.3
Graduates with GPA > = 3.00 who Scored Below Recommended Cut					
Reading					
Number	8	7	9	2	26
Percent	5.3	3.6	12.8	11.1	6.0
Writing					
Number	3	0	0	0	3
Percent	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7
Computation					
Number	1	1	6	0	8
Percent	0.7	0.5	8.6	0.0	1.9
Essay					
Number	28	28	20	2	78
Percent	18.7	14.5	28.6	11.1	18.1
One or More Tests					
Number	31	30	24	3	88
Percent	20.7	15.5	34.3	16.7	20.4

Data Source: Miami-Dade CLAST files, SAS Analysis.

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Table 2

Summary of Fall Term Grades Earned at Miami-Dade 1983-84

Campus	A	B	C	D	F	I	S	P	U	W	WD	WI	X	NR	Total
North	9,270	9,145	7,973	2,403	3,908	725	1,686	1,407	429	5,369	2,413	363	180	174	45,449
South	9,353	11,755	10,866	3,376	5,012	389	1,845	920	610	7,144	3,683	1,162	107	58	56,310
Mitchell Wolfson	4,155	4,083	3,574	1,039	2,203	150	912	311	234	2,055	1,582	937	28	45	21,258
Medical Center	1,794	2,238	1,887	351	337	151	826	308	155	440	383	65	1	4	8,720
College-Wide	24,572	27,225	24,030	7,169	11,490	1,415	5,269	2,946	1,428	15,008	8,061	2,527	316	281	131,737

Analysis

Campus	Success C or Better	Percent All Grades	Success D or Better	Percent All Grades
North	26,392	58.1	28,795	63.4
South	31,974	56.8	35,350	62.8
Mitchell Wolfson	11,762	55.3	12,801	60.2
Medical Center	5,699	65.4	6,050	69.4
College-Wide	75,827	57.6	82,996	63.0

Data Source: Campus Registrars

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